

Title: Japanese Puppetry Unit

Subject: Drama

Grade level: middle or high school

Materials required:

Whiteboard or large sheet of paper, markers, photocopies of Japanese puppetry packets, laminated photos of Japanese puppets, long string, clothespins, lined paper, pens or pencils, DVD of puppetry film clips, puppet building materials

Time/periods: 12-15 forty-five minute classes

Objectives: please see individual lessons

Standards: please see individual lessons

Procedure: please see individual lessons

Summative Assessment:

In small groups, students will perform short scenes from Japanese puppet shows, incorporating elements of Japanese puppetry (music, chanting, 3 operators per puppet, etc.) and demonstrating understanding of performance style, costuming, and makeup.

Sources:

“Chikamatsu Hanji.” Global Performing Arts Database. 2006, Global Performing Arts Consortium. <<http://www.glopad.org/pi/en/record/person/1001635>>.

“Chushingura.” Encyclopedia Britannica Online. 2011.
<<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/117400/Chushingura>>.

"Takemoto Gidayū." *Encyclopædia Britannica. Encyclopædia Britannica Online.*
Encyclopædia Britannica, 2011. Web. Mar. 2011.
<<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/581196/Takemoto-Gidayu>>.

“The Meiji and Taisho Eras in Photographs.” National Diet Library. 2008.
<http://www.ndl.go.jp/scenery/kansai/e/column/goryo_bunrakuza.html>.

Greggory, Kyle. “Bunraku: History of Puppetry in Japan, Part Three.” 5 January 2010.
<http://www.associatedcontent.com/article/2545585/bunraku_history_of_puppetry_in_japan_pg2.html?cat=37>.

Holman, Martin. “Tonda Traditional Japanese Bunraku Puppets.” 9 September 2009.
<<http://www.asianinterstage.com/tonda/>>.

Johnson, Matthew. "A Brief Introduction to the History of Bunraku." 14 August 1995.
<<http://www.sagecraft.com/puppetry/definitions/Bunraku.hist.html>>.

Mackey-Smith, Alexander IV. "Awaji Ningyo Joruri: Puppetry for the People." 30 September 2000. Japan Times Online. <<http://search.japantimes.co.jp/cgi-bin/ft20000930a1.html>>.

Okochi, Harumi. "Bunraku." December 2003.
<<http://www.yoyokaku.com/bunraku3.jpg>>.

Sakata, Shane. "An Edo Era Puppet Performance in Tokyo." 4 December 2008.
<<http://www.nihonsun.com/2008/12/04/an-edo-era-puppet-performance-in-tokyo/>>.

List of Additional Sources:

HISTORY, INFO, VIDEO CLIPS: <http://www.bunraku.org/>

ELEMENTS, VIDEO, HISTORY: <http://www2.ntj.jac.go.jp/unesco/bunraku/en/>

OVERVIEW: <http://www.infomapjapan.com/hstore/200712-infospecial.phtml>

TIMELINE: <http://comm.unt.edu/histofperf/KSmeaton/Chronology.htm>

BOOK: A guide to the Japanese stage: from traditional to cutting edge

By Ronald Cavaye, Paul Griffith, Akihiko Senda

Unit: Japanese Puppetry (12-15 lessons), Middle or High School

Unit Overview (lesson breakdown):

1. History of Japanese puppetry
2. Elements of Japanese puppetry and the Japanese puppet stage
3. Stock characters in Japanese puppetry
4. Scene study
5. Designing puppets
- 6-9. Rehearsal and constructing
10. Feedback
- 11-15. Rehearsals and final performance

Unit Objectives:

- Students will be able to identify elements of Japanese puppetry.
- Students will practice collaboration and team building when designing, building, and rehearsing.
- Students will understand the history of Japanese puppetry.
- Students will practice performance and audience skills when showcasing their work.

LESSON 1: History of Japanese Puppetry

Objective:

Students will be able to map out the history of Japanese puppetry.

Theatre Blueprint Benchmarks, “Developing Theater” strand:

“Students develop an understanding of dramatic structure and theater traditions.”

”Students examine theatre history to further understand its social and cultural context.”

Vocabulary:

Puppet, puppeteer, manipulation, chanter, movement, costuming, music

Materials:

Whiteboard or large sheet of paper, markers, photocopies of Japanese puppetry packets, laminated photos of Japanese puppets, long string, clothespins, lined paper, pens or pencils, DVD of puppetry film clips

Procedure:

1. Students will be told they are going to begin studying Japanese puppetry and will be performing short scenes from Japanese puppet shows.
2. Students will then watch a short series of film clips on Japanese puppetry and puppeteers. For the first clip, students will watch straight through. Teacher will then ask students what they noticed, in terms of artistry, sound, costuming, and performance. The class can discuss what they saw and heard, using the drama prompt, “What did you notice about the...”:
 - a. Puppets

- b. Puppeteers
 - c. Manipulation
 - d. Chanter
 - e. Movement
 - f. Costuming
 - g. Music
3. The teacher will then play two or three more short clips. Teacher will encourage students to record their questions for the next lesson, when the class will learn about the elements of Japanese puppetry.
 4. Students will then be divided into groups. Each group will receive a laminated image of Japanese puppetry or a puppeteer. They will also receive information about their image.
 5. Groups will be asked to read through the information they received and come up with a 30-second introduction of their event/person/play using names, dates, and/or important facts. They will be given one sheet of paper on which to write all of the pertinent information they wish to share with the class.
 6. Groups will present their findings to the class in timeline order. The notes and pictures will be pinned to the string.
 7. If there is time, another clip of Japanese puppetry may be shown.

HOMEWORK: Read through “Elements of Japanese Puppetry” hand-out

Takemoto Gidayu (1651–1714)



Takemoto Gidayu began his career as a narrator under some of the most acclaimed masters of the period in Kyoto. He soon became famous in his own right, and was known for intimate story telling that spoke the hearts of the characters. In 1684 he decided to branch out and form his own theater, and was helped in his effort by Chikamatsu Monzaemon, the greatest playwright in Japanese history, and Takeda Izumo, a famous theater owner and manager.

Johnson, Matthew. "A Brief Introduction to the History of Bunraku." 14 August 1995.
<<http://www.sagecraft.com/puppetry/definitions/Bunraku.hist.html>>.

"Takemoto Gidayū." *Encyclopædia Britannica. Encyclopædia Britannica Online.*
Encyclopædia Britannica, 2011. Web. Mar. 2011.
<<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/581196/Takemoto-Gidayu>>.

Okochi, Harumi. "Bunraku." December 2003.
<<http://www.yoyokaku.com/bunraku3.jpg>>.

Early Japanese Puppetry

Puppetry in Japan dates back more than 1000 years. The earliest word for puppet was kugutsu. Some theories hold that puppetry came from Korea or China, or even from as far as Greece or Turkey. Japanese folklorists usually reject these theories, though, pointing to evidence that is held in the sound of the word kugutsu, which can be tied to similar words used in the names of deities, and in Japanese shrines.

It seems probable that puppetry may have long ago been used for the purposes of *Shinto* worship.

Shinto is Japan's earliest religion, which revolves around worship of the *kami*, or gods which may be present in all things.

This does not dismiss the idea that it may have come to *Shinto* from abroad, but it suggests that *Shinto* was the factor that allowed puppetry to enter Japan.

Medium Puppetry

Historically, the puppets were simpler--stick puppets that were manipulated by a medium. Puppet plays were likely created to please the god, but, over time, fashioned to please the spectators. It began to serve as a source of entertainment, and the medium-controlled puppet theatre, therefore, became the first kind of puppet theater in Japan.

Even from the beginning, "the medium makes no attempt to conceal the fact that she is manipulating the puppets," according to Japanese expert Donald Keene. This differs from other countries' versions of the art, in which the puppet masters are hidden away, or try to disguise themselves as much as possible. Their goal is to make it appear that the puppets move and speak on their own accord. The opposite is the case in the Japanese tradition.

The tendency to use the puppets by mediums may have evolved into the use of puppets to retell legends and histories that pertained to specific shrines. In fact, Keene says that "puppets were preferred to actors as performers of the divine legends because they lacked the 'smell' of human beings and could therefore impart mystery and authority to their gestures."

Johnson, Matthew. "A Brief Introduction to the History of Bunraku." 14 August 1995.
<<http://www.sagecraft.com/puppetry/definitions/Bunraku.hist.html>>.

Kugutsu Troupes

The earliest troupes were known as *Kugutsu*, named after the puppets they used in their performances. They were described in a brief account by Oe Masafusa, which is where a large amount of the available information about them comes.

The *Kugutsu* lived in tents, travelling around Japan like nomads. They had no permanent home, and used puppetry as a source of income second to hunting. They were apparently rambunctious and rude. They worshipped their gods loudly at night.

Since the *Kugutsu* had no permanent home, they paid no taxes, and did not respect local officials. Oe also recalls that their women painted their faces and performed songs and dances for spectators, and "enticed travelers to spend the night with them" (Keene 20).

There is evidence to suggest that the *Kugutsu* might have actually migrated to Japan from the continent. There is definite evidence of their existence in Korea, and it is suggested that they may have originated in Central Asia.

The puppets of the *Kugutsu* were simple and operated by the hand of a single puppeteer. The shows originally probably included swordplay and wrestling, then likely involved into very short dramas.

Greggory, Kyle. "Bunraku: History of Puppetry in Japan, Part Three." 5 January 2010.
<http://www.associatedcontent.com/article/2545585/bunraku_history_of_puppetry_in_japan_pg2.html?cat=37>.

Chikamatsu Monzaemon (1653-1725)

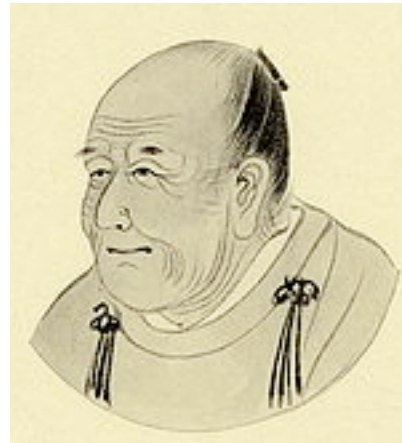


Drawn to Bunraku by Gidayū, Chikamatsu worked as a bridge between old-style joruri and Bunraku. While often keeping much of the fantasy of older tales, Chikamatsu's works are distinct for adding human elements. His drama's usually revolved around the Confucian concepts of the importance of loyalty (to one's feudal lord, family, etc.) over personal feelings and the tragedy that arises when one blindly follows the precepts.

Chikamatsu's other great accomplishment was the creation of *sewamono*, or plays about the merchant class. Greatly received in Osaka, a commercial town, a majority of these *sewamono* were about *shinju*, or love suicides. By trying the revolutionary idea of taking a recent event, that of the death of a courtesan and her lover, and dramatizing it into the play *Sonezaki Shinju*, Chikamatsu captured the imagination of the city. The play spawned not only copies, but influenced others to actually commit double suicide in the hope that their love would live on forever. In contrast to the historical plays mentioned above, here the conflict arose from the characters choosing personal feelings over loyalty.

Johnson, Matthew. "A Brief Introduction to the History of Bunraku." 14 August 1995.
<<http://www.sagecraft.com/puppetry/definitions/Bunraku.hist.html>>.

Takeda Izumo
(birthdate unknown, died 1747)



Takeda Izumo provided the money to start and technical knowhow. Takeda already ran widely popular karakuri puppet theaters and was a powerful political figure among the merchant class. Even when plays made money, proper management was necessary to keep the theater financially stable, and the Takeda family had made its fortune as producers. Takeda's other contributions to Bunraku are the effects to make the puppets more life like and to add spectacle to the theater. Both of these came from his experience in the Karakuri puppet theater. Those effects that worked in the karakuri theater he quickly introduced to Bunraku, including technical developments for the puppets, which are discussed below, and spectacular sets.

Takeda's most famous play is "Chushingura: The Treasury of Loyal Retainers."

Johnson, Matthew. "A Brief Introduction to the History of Bunraku." 14 August 1995.
<<http://www.sagecraft.com/puppetry/definitions/Bunraku.hist.html>>.

"Chushingura." Encyclopedia Britannica Online. 2011.
<<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/117400/Chushingura>>.

Kabuki Influence



Inspired by the success in Bunraku, Kabuki increasingly adapted plays written for the puppets. Along with the plays, the acting styles used in these plays mimicked the movements of the puppets, adding to the already stylized repertory. Bunraku also looked to Kabuki for innovation. While new plays were mostly adaptations of earlier Chikamatsu and Ki works, the influence of Kabuki in the scale of the plays is clear. And while Kabuki actors mimicked the movements of puppets, puppeteers strived for realism. This led to a number of innovations, including moving eyes, eyebrows, etc, but the biggest step in this direction was the use of three puppeteers to control one puppet: one for the head and right arm (hand), one for the left arm and one for the feet. The first time this method was used was in the play *Kuzu no ha*, first performed in 1734.

This golden period reached its height in the 1740's. There had been a trend since the death of Chikamatsu and Ki no Kaion to have plays written by a group of playwrights. At the beginning of this period, the 1730's, these groups were led by Namiki Sosuke at the Toyotake-za and Bun Kodo at the Takemoto-za. In 1745, though, Namiki Sosuke moved to the Takemoto-za and along with Takeda Izumo and Miyoshi Shoroku, they produced what are considered to be the three greatest classics in both Bunraku and Kabuki: *Sugawara Denju Tenarai Kagami*, *Yoshitsune Sembonzakura* and *Kanadehon Chushingura*, along with a number of plays still performed regularly today.

Johnson, Matthew. "A Brief Introduction to the History of Bunraku." 14 August 1995.
<<http://www.sagecraft.com/puppetry/definitions/Bunraku.hist.html>>.

Edo Puppetry



Ningyo or Japanese marionette puppetry is one of Japan's traditional art forms and dates back to the Edo period when the puppets were first brought over from Europe. In 1635, almost 400 hundred years ago, Youkiza, a marionette theatre company, was founded by Youki Magosaburou I in the Asakusa area of Tokyo. The company is designated a "National Selected Intangible Folk Cultural Property" and a "Tokyo Municipal Intangible Cultural Property" and is the oldest company in Tokyo specializing in Edo Period string operated marionette performances.

Sakata, Shane. "An Edo Era Puppet Performance in Tokyo." 4 December 2008. <
<http://www.nihonsun.com/2008/12/04/an-edo-era-puppet-performance-in-tokyo/>>.

In the mid 18th century, Bunraku began to thrive in Edo. Though there had been theaters before, these mostly showed plays that had been written in Osaka. The emergence of playwrights Hiraga Gennai, a sort of Edo period renaissance man, and Yo Yodai, a former doctor in the shogun's court, led to a period from which a number of classics was born. Unfortunately, the period was short as the playwrights lost interest and moved on to other hobbies.

Johnson, Matthew. "A Brief Introduction to the History of Bunraku." 14 August 1995.
<<http://www.sagecraft.com/puppetry/definitions/Bunraku.hist.html>>.

Chikamatsu Hanji (1725-1783) and the decline of Japanese Puppetry



Bunraku began a decline from the 1750's due to the death of Namiki, Takeda and popular narrators. Its last glasp of glory came in the 1770's with the emergence of the playwright Chikamatsu Hanji. Working on the bulk of works that came before him, Hanji wrote plays with extremely complicated interpersonal relationships and had a flair for out-of-the-blue endings. He was the main playwright for the Takemoto-za puppet theatre. A specialist in historical plays (jidaimono). Still, the quality and strength of his work is evident in the fact that a majority of the plays are still performed today.

After Hanji's death, Bunraku fell into an irrecoverable decline. Though there were hit plays, they were few and far between. In fact, *Ehon Taikoki*, which premiered in 1799, is often called "the last Bunraku classic." Despite a number of star puppeteers and narrators, the lack of a skilled playwright could not be overcome, and by the early 19th century, the theater had already turned exclusively to plays of the past.

“Chikamatsu Hanji.” Global Performing Arts Database. 2006, Global Performing Arts Consortium. <<http://www.glopad.org/pi/en/record/person/1001635>>.

Japanese Puppetry Today



Bunraku today is enjoying a mild revival. In 1966 it gained what it did not have in almost 150 years when the opening of the National Theater in Tokyo gave it a permanent home. In 1985 this home moved to its origin, Osaka, with the opening of the National Bunraku Theater. Currently there are four performances each a year in Tokyo and Osaka plus a yearly travelling show. The popularity of puppeteers Yoshida Tamao, Yoshida Minosuke and Yoshida Bunjaku helps fill the theaters and the number of younger patrons has begun to rise in recent years. Still, though audiences are important, the aging of the all-important backstage workers - head carvers, costume makers, etc. - and the lack of people to take their place poses an increasing problem for the future of this 300 year old art form.

Johnson, Matthew. "A Brief Introduction to the History of Bunraku." 14 August 1995.
<<http://www.sagecraft.com/puppetry/definitions/Bunraku.hist.html>>.

Uemura Bunrakuken



The word 'Bunraku' is now synonymous to 'Ningyo Joruri', but it used to be the name of the Ningyo Joruri performance by Uemura Bunrakuken, or the name of a playhouse in which he performed his Ningyo Joruri. The name 'Uemura Bunrakuken' was more of a title than a name. Bunrakuken I was from Awaji, where Ningyo Joruri enjoyed more popularity than in Osaka. He came to Osaka and opened a training school of Joruri, which is said to be the origin of 'Bunraku.' There are several opinions about the exact year, but it was at the beginning of the 19th century in the era of the eleventh shogun, Tokugawa Ienari.

In 1811, the second Bunrakuken moved his base to Nanba Shrine in Osaka's Bakuro-machi and started to perform there. The play is commonly called '*Inari no Shibai* (Performance at Inari).' Public performances at temples and shrines were an established genre, as it had been called *Miyashibai* or *Miyajishibai*. (Temple Play or Shrine Play) One of the reasons of its development may have been the exceptional handling of the performances held in the premises of temples and shrines, although public performances before the Meiji era had been administrated by giving a license called *Nadai* (Note 1). They could perform without that license at temples and shrines under the premise of a contribution to the prosperity of the temple or shrine.

“The Meiji and Taisho Eras in Photographs.” National Diet Library. 2008.
<http://www.ndl.go.jp/scenery/kansai/e/column/goryo_bunrakuza.html >.

Awaji Puppets



More generally known as ningyo joruri, puppet theater has a number of folk traditions scattered around the country, local variations descended from the itinerant puppeteer troupes who played at planting and harvest festivals in past centuries.

The oldest such tradition, it is generally agreed, is that of Awaji, the large island which faces Osaka and closes off Osaka Bay from the Inland Sea. Awaji takes pride in its local puppet tradition as the source of all the rest. More than 40 theaters are reported to have been in operation there in the 18th century; they dwindled to 14 in the Meiji Era, then to three just before World War II, and the art looked likely to die out altogether (like so many other Japanese arts) in the postwar chaos.

Local patriotism came to the rescue. The Awaji Ningyo Kyokai (Awaji Puppetry Association) was formed, and as a result of their efforts, in 1971 Awaji puppetry was formally designated a National Intangible Folk-Cultural Resource by the Agency for Cultural Affairs. Today it is performed daily at the Awaji Ningyo Joruri-kan in Fukura, overlooking the new Naruto Ohashi Bridge.

As with most such things, the beginnings of Awaji puppetry are obscure and difficult to document. It is clear that in the 16th century Awaji saw a rapid development of puppetry as a local specialty, and in the 17th and 18th centuries the island was the main source of puppeteers for both the Osaka theaters and the traveling troupes.

The Awaji puppets do nonetheless have some differences from their Osaka colleagues. Awaji puppetry, as a folk art patronized by villagers, was frequently performed at outdoor stages in village festivals, where distraction and noise were a problem. The better to hold the audience's attention, Awaji's puppets came to be somewhat larger than Osaka's, and their gestures and poses more exaggerated and emphatic. Moreover, certain plays which have dropped from the repertory in Osaka are still performed in Awaji.

Mackey-Smith, Alexander IV. "Awaji Ningyo Joruri: Puppetry for the People." 30 September 2000. Japan Times Online. < <http://search.japantimes.co.jp/cgi-bin/ft20000930a1.html>>.

Tonda Puppets



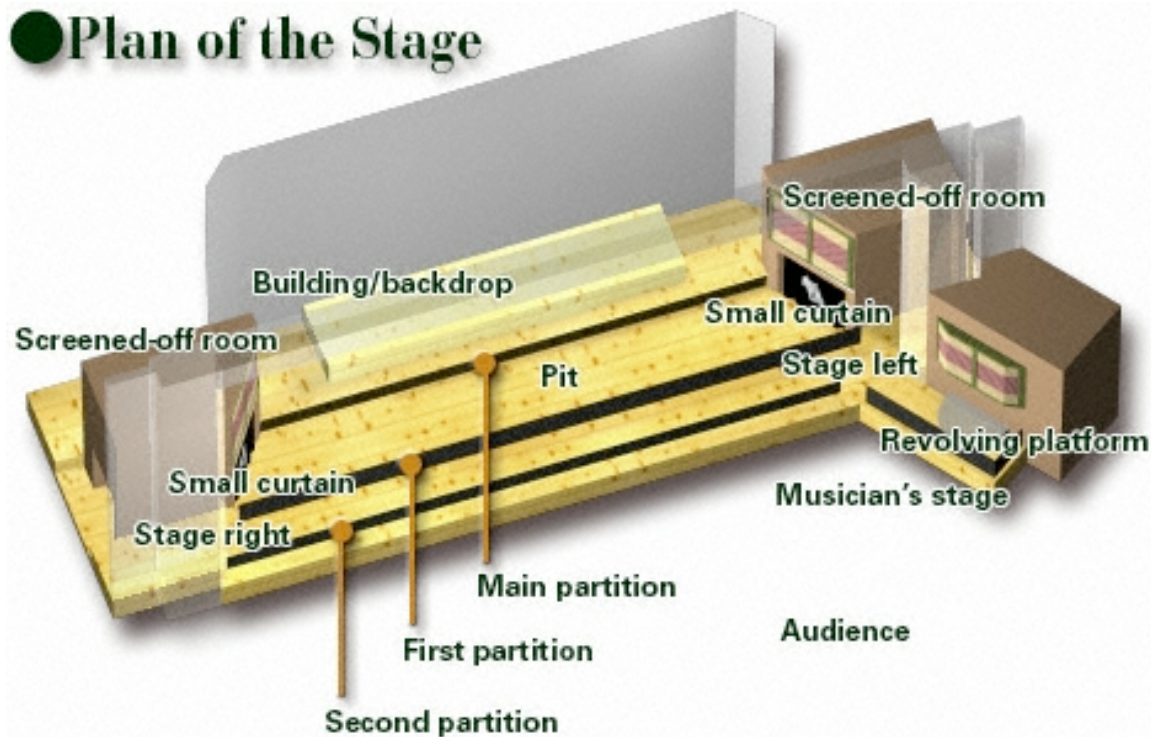
The early history of the Tonda Puppets is documented by few written sources. According to the story passed down through the years, an itinerant puppet troupe from Awa, in present-day Tokushima Prefecture on the island of Shikoku, came to Tonda to perform during the winter in the mid 1830s. Bad weather prevented the troupe from performing for several weeks as they remained snowbound in the village. By the time they could move on, they were broke, so they left behind a large number of puppets and stage equipment with the local people as collateral for a loan to pay their travel expenses back to Shikoku. After years passed and no one returned to reclaim the puppets, the people of Tonda began to try their hand at operating the puppets themselves. When another itinerant puppet troupe came through the area a few years later, the people of Tonda had the visitors teach them the principles of puppet manipulation and the conventions of the theatre. This was the beginning of the Tonda Bunraku theatre.

Holman, Martin. "Tonda Traditional Japanese Bunraku Puppets." 9 September 2009.

<<http://www.asianinterstage.com/tonda/>>.

Handout: Elements of Japanese Puppetry

● Plan of the Stage



The Chanter (Tayu)

Bunraku plays develop through the chanting of *gidayu-bushi*, and their mission is to see to what degree an expressionless doll made of wood can be filled with the breath of life through the *gidayu-bushi*. The chanter (*tayu*) not only recites the dialogue for all the characters, but also relates the spectacle of the scene and explains the background behind the event taking place. Long pieces take about 90 minutes, and the number of characters can vary from only a few to around fifteen. And the chanter performs them all—young and old, male and female, warriors and townspeople—in different ways appropriate to each character, all by himself. So it is not an easy task. Moreover, his greatest objective is to express the actual emotions of each of the characters. Someone who listens for the first time to a chanter perform might feel besieged by exaggerated emotions. But that is itself the uniquely expressive power of *gidayu-bushi* —to give the audience a strong impression about the character's personality. And even if the story is about something that took place in the ancient past, still our basic humanness and human emotions are very carefully portrayed, and even today's young performers can elicit the same responses from the audience.

The Shamisen Player There are three types of *shamisen*: *futo-zao* ('thick-necked'), *chu-zao* or *naka-zao* ('medium-necked'), and *hoso-zao* ('thin-necked'). True to its name, the *futo-zao shamisen* is the largest and lowest pitched of the three types, for which reason it is made use of in *gidayu-bushi*, which requires singing from the lower abdomen, and it

produces a very powerful timbre. Unlike other types of accompaniment, the *shamisen* used in *gidayu-bushi* must "play the strings of the heart." Just as the chanter, when reciting, places more importance on expressing the feelings of the tale than on musicality, it is important for the *shamisen* player too to fill his playing with the "heart" of the piece, and also to assist the chanter in his recitation. But even if it produces exceptionally beautiful tones, or allows us to listen to the freshness of the dexterous use of its large plectrum, the *futo-zao* shamisen produces a type of music whose feeling is quite different from *yoruri*, and is not proper as the *gidayu shamisen*. For that reason, the ideal is that the *shamisen* player must become one in spirit with the chanter. Unlike with the recitation, which is expressed through words, with the *shamisen*, it requires extremely difficult techniques to express human emotions through a single tonal color. That is why even a first-time theatergoer who listens to a *shamisen* master cannot help but come away filled with emotion.

INFORMATION TAKEN FROM:

"The Puppet Theatre of Japan: Bunraku." Japan Arts Council, 2004.
<<http://www2.ntj.jac.go.jp/unesco/bunraku/en/>>.

Template for Grading Final Project

Name: _____ Group: _____

LESSON 1: History of Japanese Puppetry

Participation in discussion	Y	N
Participation in group work and presentation	Y	N

LESSON 2:

Participation in discussion	Y	N
Participation in group work and presentation	Y	N

LESSON 3:

Student is able to identify at least two stock characters	Y	N
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LESSON 4:

Student followed rehearsal rules	1	2	3	4	5
Student can articulate plot of the scene	1	2	3	4	5
Student was able to map out scene, setting, and characters	1	2	3	4	5

LESSON 5:

Student completed one character design	1	2	3	4	5
Based on the character, design included proper:					
Facial expression	1	2	3	4	5
Clothing	1	2	3	4	5
Colors	1	2	3	4	5
Size	1	2	3	4	5

LESSONS 6+:

Student participated in his/her group's rehearsals	1	2	3	4	5
Student participated in his/her group's performance	1	2	3	4	5
Student effectively employed tools from the actor's toolbox:					
Body	1	2	3	4	5
Voice	1	2	3	4	5
Mind	1	2	3	4	5
Performance adhered to performance qualities of Japanese puppetry	1	2	3	4	5

ADDITIONAL FEEDBACK: